

Making Claims About the Immigration-Crime Nexus in Major U.S. Newspapers

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Abstract:

News media serve as a platform for claims-makers to share their views on important policy issues like immigration and crime. One theory posited by some media claims-makers is that immigration leads to more crime in American communities, a view that often resonates with segments of the public. In contrast, academic study findings have generally refuted a causal relationship between immigration and crime, with some prominent sociologists suggesting that immigration may serve to revitalize communities. To date, there have been few studies empirically examining the politicians, advocacy groups, and others who use the news media to promote views of immigration, crime, and responses to crime. Addressing this gap in research, we conduct an ethnographic content analysis of news articles from major U.S. newspapers that frame immigration as having either criminogenic or revitalizing effects on communities. In this study, we identify the relative frequency of claims-makers and common themes emerging from their quotes. Findings from this study will advance our understanding of how news media help construct public narratives of the immigration-crime nexus. Based on our findings, we will suggest ways that claims-makers can inform future public discussion about immigration and crime based on social science research.